Punjab receives first winter rain, hailstorm

By Imran Gabol

LAHORE: After a long dry spell, Punjab witnessed its first widespread rain of the winter season on Thursday with scattered rain expected on Friday (today).

Several parts of the city, including Punjab University and Wagah Border areas, also experienced a hailstorm.

Rain brought light to moderate showers to Lahore and other districts and lowered temperatures across the province. Rainfall was reported in several areas including Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Rawalpindi, Bahawalpur, and DG Khan.

In Lahore, areas such as Samanabad and Johar Town recorded 6mm of rain, while Jail Road, Gulberg, and Iqbal Town saw 4mm of rain. Mughalpura and Tajpura areas received lighter showers of 0.5mm.

According to data collected from respective District Emergency Operation Centres and the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), other areas receiving rainfall included Joharabad 11mm, Noorpur Thal 9mm, Murree 8mm, Sargodha & Chakwal 7mm each, Rahim Yar Khan & Khanpur 6mm each, Jhang, Layyah (Karor), & Kot Addu 5mm each, Rawalpindi varying from 3-5mm in different areas, Bhakkar 4mm and Faisalabad 3mm. Rain was also reported in DG Khan, Rajanpur, Multan, Muzaffargarh and Bahawalpur districts.

The PMD forecasted cold and cloudy weather for Friday, with rain, wind, thunderstorms, or snow expected in Kashmir, Murree, Galiyat, and their surroundings. Moderate to heavy rain or snow may occur during the morning hours. Intermittent rain, wind, or thunderstorms are also predicted for Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Lahore, Faisalabad, Sialkot, and several other districts.

It has warned that northeastern districts of Punjab could experience heavy rain and hailstorms.

In response to the weather forecast, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab issued a rain alert for Lahore and various districts.

PDMA Director General Irfan Ali Kathia directed all deputy commissioners and relevant departments to remain on high alert to handle any emergency.

41 more Katcha gangsters surrender

By Our Correspondent

DERA GHAZI KHAN: As many as 41 more wanted Katcha gangsters belonging to the Umerani and Jamal areas surrendered before the Rajanpur Police on Thursday.

The gangsters surrendered at the Samar Machhi police picket of the Rujhan Police Station.

The capitulation is the direct result of a sustained more than weeklong police operation launched against criminal elements in the Katcha Umerani and Katcha Jamal regions.

The surrendered gangsters belong to three major gangs: the Patt Umerani Gang, the Dado Bangyani Gang, and the Gora Umrani Gang.

Rajanpur DPO Mirza Imran said that this marked a major success for the ongoing operation. He said that over the last four days, a total of 95 gangsters have laid down their arms and surrendered to the Rajanpur Police, indicating significant pressure on criminal networks in the area.

He said legal proceedings were being followed after the arrests.

Another biker injured by stray kite string

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The kite flying-related incidents continued to surface in the city as another young motorcyclist got critical throat injuries soon after the string of a stray kite entangled around his neck in the jurisdiction of Factory Area police here on Thursday.

Identified as Adnan (25) of Walton Road, the young man was hospitalised in a pool of blood where he underwent a critical procedure. As per the reports, Adnan riding a bike was on his way to a local market when a sharp string fell on him and his neck got partially slit.

Some passersby gathered on the spot when they found the young man had gone into deep shock as he was bleeding profusely.

A police official said Adnan was immediately rushed to the Lahore General Hospital where the doctors suspected that the slit caused by the string was very deep and his veins may have been snipped.

He said the family members of the man reached the hospital after they received a call.

Talking to media persons, one of the family members urged the Punjab government to take notice of the blatant violation of the kite flying regulations saying the repercussions could be more serious if not stopped as a large number of bike riders were coming on the roads everyday to perform routine activities.

Earlier, a young motorcyclist received injuries to his throat by the string of a stray kite in the Shadbagh area some three days ago.

Identified as 24-year-old Bilal Aslam, the man was going on his motorcycle when the string entangled around his neck, leaving a deep cut to his throat, near Tokewala Chowk.

The Rescue 1122 ambulance had rushed him to the Mayo Hospital where he underwent a procedure.

LAHORE: Motorcyclists stand in queues to get free safety rods installed on their bikes on The Mall. — White Star

1,142 fire hydrants for major markets

Plazas, schools, hospitals given two weeks to implement SOPs

Dawn Report

LAHORE: The Punjab government has given two weeks to stakeholders to implement Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in plazas, schools and hospitals in the wake of Gul Plaza inferno in Karachi.

"A building grading system has now been introduced across the province, under which safe buildings will be categorised as A-grade, while others will be graded according to their condition. The firefighting sector is being upgraded with modern technology, drones and state-of-the-art equipment," Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari told a presser here on Thursday.

She said that Rescue 1122 will provide Wasa with a geotagged list of water hydrants while all stakeholders are being taken on board to ensure SOPs implementation in plazas, schools and hospitals.

"Directives have been issued to ensure complete SOPs in compliance within two weeks. A separate monitoring cell is being established with special powers granted to the Pera Force to assist in oversight," she said and added that buildings had been made legally bound to clearly display entry and exit points. She said that decisions taken in Punjab were implemented in practice, with zero tolerance for negligence.

The minister said that modern technologically equipped ambulances are being provided to Rescue 1122, while 240 patients had already been airlifted via air ambulance, saving valuable lives. She said that Rescue 1122 had so far saved the public from financial losses exceeding Rs 750 billion.Responding to a question, Azma Bokhari said political point-scoring over the Karachi Gul Plaza tragedy was inappropriate.

"Accidents do not come with prior warning but governments are responsible for timely action"Meanwhile, the Punjab government has approved a plan to install 1,142 fire hydrants at all major commercial markets, plazas and business centres across the province on an emergent basis in a bid to strengthen public safety.

All points/locations where the fire hydrants are set to be installed and made functional by March 1 have been selected and geotagged for quick access.

The plan was announced by the Housing, Urban Development and Public Health Engineering Department that stated that the initiative is designed to improve rapid response to fire incidents and significantly reduce loss of life and property.

"The installation of the fire hydrants will be the responsibility of the Rescue 1122," Housing Department Secretary retired Capt Noorul Amin Mengal told *Dawn* on Thursday.

"The objective behind this emergent plan is to avert Karachi Gul Plaza fire tragedy-like tragedies in the province," he said.

The fire hydrants will be installed at critical locations including major markets, commercial centres, and high-density business districts where fire incidents pose heightened risks.

Police rebuff fake encounter charges against CCD

Report presented to LHC defends crime control dept; claims 60pc drop in robbery and murder cases

By Wajih Ahmad Sheikh

LAHORE: A Punjab police report filed with the Lahore High Court has claimed that the establishment of the controversial Crime Control Department (CCD) led to a significant decline in serious crime across the province.

"The rationale behind the establishment of the CCD was to deal effectively with serious and organised crimes," Inspector General of Police (IGP) Usman Anwar said in the report.

The report was submitted in connection with a petition against alleged fake encounters by the CCD in Punjab and for the implementation of the Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act 2022. Advocate Mian Dawood and others filed the petition in the wake of the killing of a young lawyer in Vehari.

The police report claimed that the CCD, as per its mandate, right from its formation has been working against the hardened criminals and inter-district and provinces gangs.

It further claimed that crimes against property have decreased by more than 64 per cent while incidents of dacoity with murder have been reduced by up to 60pc during the last seven months.

It said the petitioners levelled unfounded and baseless allegations against the CCD.

The report stated that the CCD has the duty to uphold law and order pursuing criminals through lawful means, ensuring arrests, investigations and prosecution within the bounds of due process.

It said the CCD has a very strong disciplinary and accountability mechanism and stringent action is taken against the delinquent official.

About the killing of lawyer Zeeshan Dhaddi in Vehari, the report said the case has been referred to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for an inquiry under the Custodial Death (Prevention and Punishment) Act 2022.

The police also challenged the locus standi of the petitioners, saying they approached the court without exhausting adequate remedy in the form of filing a complaint before the FIA. It asked the court to dismiss the petition.

Justice Abher Gul Khan would hear the petition on Feb 4.

The petition claimed that since the creation of the CCD, the national media and human rights bodies have been highlighting incidents of extra-judicial killings by Punjab police.

It argued that the CCD created a state of fear and panic in the society with the impression that the police can, now, kill any person by declaring him a criminal after preparing his past criminal record by implicating them in already lodged FIRs through supplementary statements.

According to media reports, nearly 1,100 citizens have been killed in police encounters so far, it added.

The petition argued that the superior judiciary, in multiple judgments, has already declared fake police encounters unconstitutional and illegal.

"Fake encounters are being used as an alternative to the criminal justice system," it alleged.

Anti-judiciary campaign

NCCIA, PTA directed to remain within bounds of the laws

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday ordered the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) that all operations against the anti-judiciary campaign must remain strictly within the "four corners of the law".

"No illegal or unwarranted harassment shall be caused to any person, and all actions shall be undertaken strictly in accordance with due process of law," Justice Ali Zia Bajwa maintained in an order passed on a petition challenging the social media campaign against female judges of the LHC.

The judge directed the agencies that the exercise of authority must remain lawful, proportionate and guided by constitutional and statutory safeguards.

"This court shall not permit any misuse or abuse of authority by state functionaries under the guise of curbing or countering any campaign against the judiciary," the judge cautioned the authorities.

Justice Bajwa clarified that guarding the dignity of the judiciary cannot become a license for excess because power exercised without law ceases to be authority.

Earlier, fresh reports were submitted by the NCCIA and the PTA.

A law officer stated that both departments were fully vigilant and actively engaged in curbing any nefarious campaign against the judiciary.

He further assured that no stone shall be left unturned to eliminate this menace and to ensure the dignity, independence, and institutional integrity of the judicial system.

Separately, Justice Bajwa issued a show cause notice to a lawyer, Akmal Khan, of contempt proceedings for obstructing the hearing. Although the lawyer tendered an unconditional apology, he declined to submit the same in writing. The judge relisted the hearing.

At the previous hearing, the NCCIA had told the court that at least eight individuals had been arrested for running a malicious campaign on social media against Chief Justice Aalia Neelum and other judges.

The report filed by the NCCIA revealed that at least eight suspects had been arrested from different cities of Punjab following registration of FIRs.

Those arrested include Iftikhar Mehmood Chaudhry by Islamabad circle, Rana Sarwar and Shahbaz Amin by Lahore circle, Muhammad Ali, Rana Khalid Hussain, Ghulam Mustafa, Muhammad Ali Bhutta and Abdul Sattar by Multan circle.

The report further revealed that NCCIA Lahore circle registered a FIR against a Youtube channel "Siyasi Dera" hosted by Ihsanullah Chattha, known as "Mitha Gee" for being involved in the dissemination of derogatory and defamatory content against the judges. Chattha is famous for creating pro-PML-N content on social media.

The FIR was registered on a complaint of a lawyer, Akmal Khan.

However, documents available with *Dawn*, revealed that the FIR against the Youtuber Mitha Gee had been quashed on the pretext that a similar case had already been registered with the Islamabad circle.

A lawyer, Azeem Danyal, is reportedly missing since registration of a case against him by NCCIA-Islamabad for allegedly spreading contemptuous content against judges on social media.

Ichhra gold scam suspect arrested from Islamabad

By Asif Chaudhry

LAHORE: In a major breakthrough in the Rs1bn gold fraud case of Ichhra Bazaar, the police have reportedly arrested the suspect, a jeweller, from Islamabad and shifted him to an undisclosed location.

A police team was staying in Islamabad for the last 10 days or so when they got a tip-off that the suspect, Waseem Akthar, was hiding somewhere in the federal capital. He was nominated in multiple FIRs lodged by his fellow jewellers besides his own stepmother.

The major fraud case surfaced in the second week of December 2025 when several jewellers of Madina Jewellers Market Ichhra after they came to know that Waseem had disappeared suddenly with 20kg of gold worth over Rs1 billion they had "invested" with him for decades.

The lockers of the suspect's shop where they had deposited the gold ornaments were found unlocked at the time when the affected jewellers visited the premises.

An official, privy to the development, said the suspect kept on changing his location and the police finally managed to arrest him and his wife.

The official source claimed that the Lahore Police watned to do the interrogation in their own style to ensure the maximum recovery of the gold he had made off with.

For this purpose, the police high-ups issued some instructions to keep the arrest secret, the source said. But the officers' plan was spoiled when Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on a social media platform claimed the suspect had been arrested.

The police source claimed that the offences/charges mentioned in the FIRs against the suspect as compared to his scale of crime were not strong enough to take him to the court of law for some major punishment. So the police officers decided to investigate the case 'in a traditional way' by interrogating the suspect without showing his arrest in the official record, the official claimed.

He added that the most concerning part of the case was that the suspect had reportedly sold everything, including his house, cars, and most probably the huge amount of the gold he had taken away.

As per the reports, an affected jeweller, Ahmad Siddiqui, told the police that he had handed over gold ornaments worth over Rs25m to Waseem Akhtar, the suspect who was the former president of Ichhra Jewellers Association. He said the suspect had been running his business, Madina Jewellers, for the last 35 years and had won the trust of the area jewellers. He said Waseem committed a criminal breach of trust, depriving dozens of his fellow jewellers of their valuables.

In another FIR lodged by a woman with the Ichhra Police Station told the police that the absconding suspect was her stepson and she had handed him over 2.5kg of her gold.

Meanwhile, the investigation wing police released a statement, announcing that Waseem Akthar had been arrested from Islamabad.

The police said he was nominated in multiple FIRs registered on the complaints of the affected jewellers of Ichhra market and further investigations were underway, refusing to share more details.